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Chief of Environmental Health

Also serving the cities of

Adelanto	Montclair
Apple Valley	Needles
Barstow	Ontario
Big Bear Lake	Rancho Cucamonga
Chino	Redlands
Chino Hills	Rialto
Colton	San Bernardino
Fontana	Twentynine Palms
Grand Terrace	Upland
Hesperia	Victorville
Highland	Yucaipa
Loma Linda	Yucca Valley

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2004

PHD#

Contact: Joan Mulcare
Program Manager
(909) 387-4692
(909) 356-3805 (after 5 p.m.)

WEST NILE VIRUS CONFIRMED IN 8 DEAD CROWS IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

West Nile Virus (WNV) has been detected in 8 dead American crows in San Bernardino County. The test confirmation was received from the State Department of Health Services and the Center for Vector-borne Disease Research Unit at UC Davis at on Friday afternoon, May 21, 2004. The crows were collected from May 7 to May 13 in the cities of Fontana, Bloomington, San Bernardino, Montclair, Rialto and Highland. These positive findings are the second in 2004 and confirm that WNV activity is continuing in the County. A positive test on a collection of mosquitoes was also reported in the City of Montclair, which is in the West Valley Mosquito Control District.

Within the coming week, San Bernardino County Vector Control staff will be distributing fact sheets to residences and looking for water sources on properties within a one-mile radius of the locations where the birds were collected. The Vector Control Program is continuing its efforts in public education, active vector control operations, and surveillance.

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Since mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water, residents are encouraged to look for and eliminate any standing or stagnant water on their properties. Un-chlorinated pools and ponds are a major source of mosquito breeding, so residents are strongly urged to keep their pools clean. Green or dirty pools impact entire neighborhoods, and mosquitoes breeding in such pools fly over property lines to bite people several blocks away. Please report green pools and other sources of mosquito breeding to San Bernardino County Vector Control Program at (800) 44-ABATE or (909) 388-4600.

“The public should be aware that mosquitoes, not birds, transmit West Nile Virus,” said Dr. Eric Frykman, Public Health Officer. “When birds are bitten by infected mosquitoes, certain kinds of birds, especially crows, die, but the birds themselves do not pose a health risk – they are only indicators that the mosquitoes in the area are carrying the virus. ” Although there is no evidence humans can get the virus from handling live or dead infected birds, people should not attempt to catch or handle sick birds without gloves. People finding dead birds on weekends can double-bag them and throw them into the trash since the State does not perform tests or pick up dead birds during the weekend. During the week, residents can call the California Department of Health Services at 877-WNV-BIRD to report dead birds.

Fewer than 1 percent of individuals infected with WNV, primarily the elderly and those with lowered immune systems, may develop serious illness such as encephalitis and meningitis. Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Others will have only mild symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. Transmission of WNV from human to human generally does not occur.

San Bernardino County citizens can protect themselves from mosquito bites by taking these precautions:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when outdoors.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET. Follow the label directions when using any repellent.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property that can support mosquito breeding.

The Public Health Department is working with the medical community to monitor for any human cases that may occur. “Minimizing mosquito habitat is crucial to preventing human cases,” Dr. Frykman said.

Since horses are susceptible to WNV and a vaccine is available for horses, horse owners are advised to contact their veterinarians about timely vaccinations.

For more information about WNV, visit www.sbcounty.gov/dehs or call the San Bernardino Vector Control Program at 1-800-44-ABATE Monday thru Friday 8:00am to 5pm. If you are in the cities of Montclair, Upland, Rancho Cucamonga, Ontario, Chino or Chino Hills, you are served by the West Valley Mosquito Control District, which can be reached at 909 627-0931.

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